

**Amendments to the Claims:**

Please amend the claims as shown below. This Listing of Claims will replace prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

**Listing of Claims:**

1. - 19. (Cancelled)

20. (Currently Amended) An image processor comprising:

a digital watermark embedding ~~means~~ unit for embedding digital watermark data in text and/or image data which is to be combined with a patterned image ; and

a combining ~~means~~ unit for combining the text and/or image data in which the digital watermark data ~~is~~ has been embedded by the digital watermark embedding ~~means~~ unit and the patterned image data in which the digital watermark data has not been embedded.

21. (Currently Amended) An image processor according to claim 20, wherein the digital watermark embedding ~~means~~ unit embeds the digital watermark data in the text by controlling the character spacing in the text.

22. (Currently Amended) An image processor according to claim 20, wherein the digital watermark embedding ~~means~~ unit embeds the digital watermark data in the text by rotating characters in the text.

23. (Currently Amended) An image processor according to claim 20 further comprising:

~~a~~ receiving unit means for receiving a permission code for copying image data of combined image data combined by the combining means;

wherein the digital watermark data is data regarding the permission code for copying image data received by the receiving means.

24. – 27. (Cancelled)

28. (Currently Amended) An image processing method comprising:

~~a digital watermark embedding step for embedding digital watermark data in the text and/or image data~~ which is to be combined with a patterned image;  
and

~~a combining step for combining the text and/or image data in which the digital watermark is~~ has been ~~embedded in the digital watermark embedding step and the patterned image~~ data in which the digital watermark data has not been embedded.

29. (Currently Amended) An image processing method according to claim 28, wherein the ~~digital watermark embedding step embeds~~ the digital watermark data in the text is done by controlling the character spacing of the text.

30. (Currently Amended) An image processing method according to claim 28, wherein the ~~digital watermark embedding step embeds~~ the digital watermark

data in the text is done by rotating characters in the text.

31. (Currently Amended) An image processing method according to claim 28 further comprising:

~~a receiving step for receiving a permission code for copying image data of~~  
the combined image data combined in the combining step;

wherein the digital watermark data is data regarding the permission code  
for the copyinged image data ~~received in the receiving step.~~

32. – 35. (Cancelled)

36. (Currently Amended) A computer-executable ~~process steps~~ program  
stored on a computer readable medium for ~~causing a computer to execute~~ing the  
method of Claim 28.

37. (Currently Amended) A computer-readable storage medium ~~for~~ storing  
the computer-executable ~~process steps~~ program of Claim 36.

38. (New) An image processor according to Claim 20, wherein the digital  
watermark data is not embedded in the patterned image.

39. (New) An image processor comprising:

an inputting unit for reading a recording medium and inputting read image data, the recording medium having patterned image data printed thereon and image data including embedded information, the patterned image data including a latent image unperceivable by human eyes, the latent image being formed more clearly on a copy-destination recording medium when information recorded on the recording medium is copied by a copying machine;

a separating unit for separating the read image data input by the inputting unit to obtain the image data including the embedded information; and

an outputting unit for controlling output of combined image data produced by combining new patterned image data with the image data including the embedded information, the new patterned image data including a latent image unperceivable by human eyes, the latent image being formed more clearly on the copy-destination recording medium when information recorded on the recording medium is copied by the copying machine.

40. (New) The image processor according to Claim 39,  
wherein the outputting unit includes an extracting unit for extracting the embedded information from the image data obtained by the separating unit, with the embedded information embedded therein,  
wherein the outputting unit outputs the combined image data when the embedded information extracted by the extracting unit includes information indicating permission for copying the whole read image data,

wherein the outputting unit cuts out and outputs a part of the combined image data when the embedded information extracted by the extracting unit includes information indicating permission for copying a part of the read image data, and

wherein the outputting unit does not output the combined image data when the embedded information extracted by the extracting unit includes information indicating prohibition of copying.

41. (New) The image processor according to Claim 39, wherein the new patterned image data including a latent image unperceivable by human eyes, the latent image being formed more clearly on a copy-destination recording medium when information recorded on the recording medium is copied by the copying machine, is patterned image data that is stored in advance or that is newly generated.

42. (New) The image processor according to Claim 39, wherein the separating unit, by separating the read image data, also obtains the patterned image data including the latent image appearing clearly in addition to the image data including information, and

wherein the outputting unit combines the new patterned image data, instead of the patterned image data with the latent image appearing clearly, with the image data with the embedded information embedded therein, and controls output of the combined image data obtained by the combining operation.

43. (New) An image processing method comprising:

an inputting step of reading a recording medium and inputting read image data, the recording medium having patterned image data printed thereon and image data with embedded information embedded therein, the patterned image data including a latent image unperceivable by human eyes, the latent image being formed more clearly on a copy-destination recording medium when information recorded on the recording medium is copied by the copying machine;

a separating step of separating the read image data input in the inputting step to obtain the image data with the embedded information embedded therein; and

an outputting step of controlling output of combined image data produced by combining new patterned image data with the image data with the embedded information embedded therein, the new patterned image data including a latent image unperceivable by human eyes, the latent image being formed more clearly on the copy-destination recording medium when information recorded on the recording medium is copied by a copying machine.

44. (New) The image processing method according to Claim 43,

wherein the outputting step includes an extracting step of extracting the embedded information from the image data, obtained in the separating step, including the embedded information,

wherein, in the outputting step, the combined image data is output when the embedded information extracted in the extracting step includes information indicating permission for copying the whole read image data,

wherein, in the outputting step, a part of the combined image data is cut out and output when the embedded information extracted in the extracting step includes information indicating permission for copying a part of the read image data, and

wherein, in the outputting step, the combined image data is not output when the embedded information extracted in the extracting step includes information indicating prohibition of copying.

45. (New) The image processing method according to Claim 43, wherein the new patterned image data including a latent image unperceivable by human eyes, the latent image being formed more clearly on the copy-destination recording medium when information recorded on the recording medium is copied by a copying machine, is patterned image data that was stored in advance or that is newly generated.

46. (New) The image processing method according to Claim 43, wherein, by separating the read image data in the separating step, the patterned image data including the latent image appearing clearly is also obtained in addition to the image data including the embedded information, and

wherein, in the outputting step, the new patterned image data, instead of the patterned image data including the latent image appearing clearly, is combined with the image data including the embedded information, and an output of the combined image data obtained by the combining operation is controlled.